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THIRD REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By paragraph 22 of resolution 1289 (2000) of 7 February 2000, the Security Council requested me to continue to report every 45 days to provide, inter alia, assessments of security conditions on the ground so that troop levels and the tasks performed by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) can be kept under review. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request and covers developments since my second report on UNAMSIL, of 11 January 2000 (S/2000/13). It also contains a section in which I describe important objectives of the peace process that lie ahead in the coming year.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

2. During the reporting period, progress has been made in the establishment and functioning of the various bodies envisaged in the Lomé Peace Agreement (S/1999/777, annex) signed on 7 July 1999. The Commission for the Consolidation of Peace, an important implementation organ, under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Paul Koroma, has now set up its offices. The Commission has commenced the drafting of a plan of action for the discharge of its mandate and is in the process of meeting with all bodies under its supervision, as specified in the Lomé Agreement. The 16-member Constitutional Review Committee, appointed in December 1999, has also started its work and is expected to present a report to President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in the near future. In the meantime, Parliament has commenced confirmation hearings for several nominees who are to serve on the National Electoral Commission and the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development. While the decision regarding the appointees to the Electoral Commission is expected in the very near future, hearings for the commissioners of the other Commission will be completed once its Chairman, Foday Sankoh, has appeared before Parliament in accordance with parliamentary requirements.

3. On 28 January 2000, Mr. Koroma submitted to President Kabbah his resignation from the Sierra Leone Army. While Mr. Koroma would remain the leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), his faction would be

dissolved with the impending reinstatement of ex-Sierra Leone Army elements into the current armed forces.

4. In the meantime, the Ministry of Defence is in the process of preparing, with the assistance of bilateral advisers, a military reintegration plan, which envisages the disarmament of all ex-Sierra Leone Army combatants and their transfer to a central location for screening and military training. The first stage of this process began on 24 February with the transfer and encampment of 1,000 ex-Army combatants from Freetown at Matene and the opening of a second camp at Batbana where 108 ex-Army combatants have been encamped; all of these combatants are now awaiting the start of the screening process. It is expected that those not found qualified for service with the army will enter the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. UNAMSIL stands ready to assist this crucial project, within the limits of its mandate and capabilities.

5. On 24 January 2000, the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali, convened the second meeting of the Joint Implementation Committee, which was attended by the representatives of the ECOWAS Committee of Seven, the five Moral Guarantors to the Lomé Agreement and international observers from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, among others. The Government of Sierra Leone was represented by the Attorney-General while the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP) was represented by its Secretary-General, Mr. Rogers. Mr. Koroma attended in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace. The Joint Implementation Committee adopted a number of recommendations aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Lomé Agreement, especially regarding compliance with the disarmament process, the ceasefire agreement and unhindered humanitarian access. The Committee also demanded that United Nations troops be allowed to carry out their mandate without restrictions and that the weapons confiscated from some of the contingents (see para. 11 below) by the armed groups be returned. During the meeting, Presidents Konaré and Kabbah announced that they would undertake a joint visit to the provinces of Sierra Leone, in order to give new impetus to the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

6. Progress in other areas of the peace process has been slow. There has been little progress in disarmament in the northern and eastern parts of the country, while rebel groups continued to interfere with humanitarian activities and UNAMSIL patrols and to harass the civilian population in those areas. During this period, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), including its leader, Mr. Sankoh, made several hostile public statements against UNAMSIL. To address this attitude, my Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, has continued to meet with the various leaders, and has publicly called upon Mr. Sankoh to demonstrate a more concrete commitment of his party to the peace process and to refrain from making hostile statements about UNAMSIL.

7. On 14 February 2000, Mr. Sankoh left Sierra Leone to travel to Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa, in violation of the travel ban imposed by Security Council resolution 1171 (1998) of 5 June 1998. In response to the violation, the sanctions committee convened in emergency session on 18 February and urged Mr. Sankoh to return immediately to Sierra Leone, which he did on 28 February.

8. As part of the ongoing involvement of ECOWAS and regional leaders in the Sierra Leonean peace process, a special meeting was organized on 1 and 2 March 2000 under the auspices of the current Chairman of ECOWAS at Bamako, which was attended by high-level representatives of the Government of Sierra Leone, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, representatives of ECOWAS and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), my Special Representative and Mr. Koroma. Mr. Sankoh, who had been invited to attend but declined, was represented by Mike Lamin. The special meeting concluded with the adoption of a communiqué in which the Chairman of ECOWAS called on all Sierra Leonean leaders, in particular the Government, the leader of RUFP and the Chairman of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace, to translate their expressions of commitment to the peace process into concrete action. That communiqué was subsequently endorsed, at their meeting held on 2 March 2000, by the Heads of State of the Mano River Union, comprising Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone.

9. Progress continues to be made towards developing the strategic framework approach for Sierra Leone. The United Nations country team has produced an initial report outlining principles and policies guiding United Nations actions and proposing appropriate institutional and coordination arrangements for ensuring coherence among United Nations entities and partners. A more comprehensive outline including the status of integration of political, human rights and assistance objectives is scheduled to be completed by mid-March.

III. SECURITY SITUATION

10. While there have been some improvements in the security situation, it generally remained tense and volatile. The security environment in the Lungi area improved significantly, mostly as a result of extensive UNAMSIL patrols, but tension remained around the Occra Hills area and in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Ceasefire violations there included ambushes against civilians, the maintenance of illegal roadblocks, movements of RUF troops from the Makeni area to Kono in the early part of February, and obstruction of peacekeeping operations.

11. There were several serious incidents involving UNAMSIL and former rebel elements or combatants. On 10 January, RUF elements seized a large number of weapons, ammunition and vehicles from a convoy of Guinean troops moving to join UNAMSIL. In two other incidents, members of the UNAMSIL Kenyan battalion were ambushed and had to surrender their weapons to ex-Sierra Leone Army combatants in the Occra Hills area on 14 January, and to RUF elements near Makeni on 31 January. RUF rebels at Makeni also disarmed and detained 14 soldiers of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) who were providing escort for a humanitarian non-governmental organization on its way to collect child combatants at Kabala on 18 January. The convoy was released the following day. In response to those incidents, the Secretariat and the Force Commander of UNAMSIL, Major General Vijay Kumar Jetley, have urged troop-contributing countries and their contingents to ensure that the troops on the ground fully comply with the mandate and rules of engagement of UNAMSIL and are equipped in accordance with United Nations standards.

12. While some of the arms taken from Kenyan battalion by the RUF fighters were later returned, those taken by the ex-Sierra Leone Army elements have still not been recovered. Under pressure from UNAMSIL, ECOMOG and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Mr. Sankoh travelled to Kamakwie on 4 February with representatives of ECOMOG, UNAMSIL and the Government of Sierra Leone to seek the return of the Guinean weapons. However, rather than issuing firm instructions, he repeatedly told RUF fighters that he was there only to investigate the incident. On his return to Freetown, Mr. Sankoh announced that RUF was not responsible for the seizure of the weapons, which is in contradiction with evidence in the possession of UNAMSIL. To date, only two Guinean armoured personnel carriers have been recovered, both of them stripped of their mounted weapons.

13. On 23 February 2000, a convoy of the Indian battalion moving from Kenema to Daru was stopped by a large number of well-armed RUF fighters. These fighters refused to let the UNAMSIL convoy proceed, in spite of repeated assurances by the RUF leadership that the Mission's freedom of movement would be respected. The convoy was then reinforced by elements from the Ghanaian battalion. A stand-off continued for two days and eventually the UNAMSIL convoy had to return to Kenema. Also on 23 February, there was an exchange of fire between rebels and a UNAMSIL patrol on Pepel Island in the Nigerian battalion area. No casualties were reported but, as a result of the incident, UNAMSIL was able to free several abductees held by the rebels.

14. The most recent RUF refusal to cooperate with UNAMSIL occurred on 29 February, when RUF fighters deployed around the United Nations landing strip at Magburaka and refused to allow a United Nations helicopter to land there. The RUF commander in Magburaka claimed that he feared that AFRC would attack them with the help of UNAMSIL. Meanwhile, RUF fighters at Daru have declared that UNAMSIL movement to Kailahun will be resisted if conducted without clearance from the RUF leadership. There have also been reports of RUF deploying an anti-aircraft weapon and laying mines in the Bendu area.

15. The Joint Implementation Committee, the Joint Monitoring Committee and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration have continued to issue strong appeals for compliance with article XIX of the Lomé Agreement, which requires all parties to the conflict to disclose the number and location of their combatants, and for the dismantling of all illegal roadblocks and checkpoints. So far, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and AFRC have provided information on the number of their combatants, while RUF has yet to do so.

Deployment of UNAMSIL

16. The strength of the military component of UNAMSIL as at 1 March had reached 7,391 military personnel, including 260 military observers (see annex). In accordance with the earlier plans, main elements of the force are currently deployed to Freetown, Lungi, Port Loko, Lunsar, Masiaka, Makeni, Magburaka, Kenema, Daru, Mile 91, Bo and Moyamba (see map). Successive efforts have been made to deploy also to Koidu and Kailahun, but these have been unsuccessful as a result of the refusal of RUF to allow UNAMSIL freedom of movement, in spite of various assurances from the RUF leadership that UNAMSIL would be able to move to those locations.

17. The military observer component of UNAMSIL, comprising officers from 32 countries, continues to undertake vital confidence-building and to assist in the screening and registration of ex-combatants at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration sites. Their unarmed presence serves as an important complement to the activities of peacekeeping troops and as liaison function between the troops, the civilian population and the various fighters in Sierra Leone.

18. The Mission's military component has also been working closely with the humanitarian community through the gradual creation of a security grid along the two main east-west arteries of the country and through the coordination of movements of relief supplies. This cooperation is designed to link humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping functions to create areas of stability in the country. Within the United Nations system operating in Sierra Leone, a joint strategy for all newly accessible areas is being developed. Of particular note in this context is the current road repair project in the Eastern Province, involving the Sierra Leone Roads Authority, funding being provided by the World Food Programme.

Presence of ECOMOG

19. In a letter dated 13 January 2000 addressed to me, the Foreign Minister of Nigeria offered to suspend, for 90 days, the withdrawal of Nigerian troops remaining in Sierra Leone so as to prevent a possible security vacuum before the deployment of the expanded UNAMSIL. In subsequent discussions with the Nigerian military authorities, it was agreed that UNAMSIL would incorporate, for 90 days starting on 7 February, two Nigerian infantry battalions and one tank company. Equipment for these elements would be provided from the ECOMOG units currently in Sierra Leone. At present, Nigerian ECOMOG troops are still deployed in Sierra Leone and are stationed at Freetown, Port Loko, Kambia, Kenema, Mange, Lunsar, Masiaka and Mile 91. These troops assist in the maintenance of the security of the State and in the disarmament process.

Civilian police

20. At present, the activities of the Sierra Leone police continue to be limited to the western part of the country, in particular Freetown; and there are very small national police presences in Kambia, Port Loko, Lunsar, Bo and Kenema. However, the police still lack the necessary personnel, facilities and equipment to fulfil essential tasks. The destruction of the national police training school during the rebel offensive of January 1999 left the local police without the means to develop its human resources or to facilitate restructuring. An additional concern is the absence of acceptable detention facilities, which force the police to keep suspects under insecure and often inhuman conditions.

21. The willingness of police personnel to return to former duty stations in the provinces has been affected by the violence inflicted on officers and their families during the conflict. The tension between police and former rebel elements has so far prevented the deployment of police officers at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration camps, where the provision of security remains solely in the hands of UNAMSIL and ECOMOG troops.

22. Despite these challenges, some tangible progress has been made in the training of police officers, improving service conditions, monitoring conduct, and implementing structural and personnel changes, conducted under the leadership of the Inspector General of Police and with the support of the Commonwealth Police Task Force and the few UNAMSIL civilian police advisers. Plans for restructuring and strengthening the force are in place, in part building on work carried out in 1998. UNAMSIL civilian police advisers have met with key stakeholders to emphasize the importance of giving high priority to the development of the Sierra Leone police force. Several hundred officers have been retrained, and skilled field trainers are ready for deployment in the provinces if resources for basic equipment, supplies and the rehabilitation of facilities can be mobilized. Moreover, some 100 members of the armed Special Security Division have been retrained and deployed in Bo and Kenema. They would, in principle, be available to protect their unarmed colleagues in the provinces. With the expected deployment of its 60 advisers, UNAMSIL will be able to provide expertise and support at district police stations and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration sites and for the retraining of police officers. The Secretariat continues consultations with prospective contributors of police officers to UNAMSIL and I appeal to them to respond positively to this urgent request to assist UNAMSIL in this important area.

IV. DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

23. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme continued at a rather slow pace, although there was a significant increase in the disarmament of CDF ex-combatants during the reporting period. As at 1 March 2000, the total number of disarmed combatants stood at 17,191, comprising 4,051 RUF, 8,851 loyal and ex-Sierra Leone Army, and 4,289 CDF ex-combatants. However, at the demobilization centre in Daru, near the RUF stronghold of Kailahun, participation in the programme remains negligible, with only some 193 ex-combatants registered. Reportedly, RUF commanders in the east of the country continue to prevent RUF and ex-Army combatants from joining the programme. On 18 and 19 February, under the auspices of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mike Lamin, as RUF representative, and the Deputy Minister of Defence and CDF Coordinator, Chief Hinga Norman, travelled to Kenema, Daru, Segbwema and Kailahun to promote disarmament in those areas. To date, however, there has been no response.

24. Of particular concern is the low quality of surrendered weapons and the ratio of collected arms to the number of ex-combatants, as many fighters report for demobilization only with ammunition or hand grenades. This issue has been raised repeatedly in meetings of the National Commission. It is expected that, once a deadline for the completion of the programme has been agreed to, the unauthorized possession of weapons in the country will be declared illegal. The destruction of weapons and ammunition is becoming increasingly urgent, owing to unsafe storage and the unstable condition of the ammunition. UNAMSIL, in cooperation with the National Commission, has developed a programme for the disposal of arms and ammunition, implementation of which is expected to begin soon. It would also be indispensable for the parties to surrender their heavy weapons and military support equipment.

25. The security situation at the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration camps continues to be a matter of concern, especially at Port Loko. In one incident, a grenade explosion at Port Loko southern camp claimed 10 casualties, including one fatality. On three occasions, UNAMSIL search operations revealed the presence of hidden weapons and ammunition, which were promptly removed. In response to these incidents, UNAMSIL has undertaken a comprehensive review of security arrangements and efforts are under way to tighten control procedures. During the reporting period there were a few incidents of unrest among ex-combatants at Lungi and Port Loko, mostly triggered by demands by ex-Sierra Leone Army members for speedy reintegration into the new army and the payment of their salaries.

26. A significant step forward in initiating reintegration activities was taken with the launching of a community rehabilitation and reintegration programme on 10 February 2000. The programme provides resources for eligible projects to the amount of US$ 25 million provided by the World Bank and $12.5 million from the African Development Bank. Project approval procedures in this area should be expedited in order to meet the needs of demobilized fighters and war-affected communities. This effort should be closely coordinated with the current or planned interventions of humanitarian and development organizations, including the United Nations.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

27. Despite substantial efforts, including by UNAMSIL, the human rights situation in Sierra Leone remains a cause for serious concern, in particular in the Port Loko area where looting of villages, house burnings, harassment and abduction of civilians, rape and sexual abuse continue, mostly perpetrated by ex-Sierra Leone Army elements from the surrounding Occra Hills. In Kabala, a large number of disarmed ex-Army combatants, as well as armed elements in the surrounding areas, continue to intimidate the civilian population and aid workers. Such violence against civilians is unacceptable. Its perpetrators should bear in mind that their actions are not covered by the amnesty under the Lomé Agreement and that they should consequently expect to be held accountable.

28. It is worth noting that fact-finding missions conducted by UNAMSIL human rights officers to Port Loko, Makeni, Magburaka, Kabala, Kenema and Daru have found that the human rights situation has tended to improve in those areas where United Nations troops and military observers have been deployed.

29. The lack of appropriate medical, psychological and other services for women victims of violence is of serious concern, especially in view of the continuing high prevalence of rape and sexual abuse. Most women and girls at camps for internally displaced persons also require treatment for sexually transmitted diseases suffered as a result of rape. It is likely that the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection is high, but accurate estimates are not currently available owing to the absence of systematic detection and data-collection efforts. UNAMSIL is taking measures to sensitize its peacekeeping personnel in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS.

30. The human rights situation in RUF-held areas continues to be disturbing, because of continuing harassment of civilians for food and money at RUF checkpoints, the imposition of illegal taxes and the visible presence of child combatants, as well as the significant numbers of abductees, including women and girls, still held by rebel elements. UNAMSIL has recently discovered illegal detention centres, including a prison run by RUF, where individuals are being held reportedly for attempting to join the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Efforts are being made to seek their immediate release. The Committee for the Release of Prisoners of War and Non-Combatants, chaired by UNAMSIL, continues to collect information on the situation of the large number of abductees still held by both RUF and ex-Sierra Leone Army elements and to advocate for their release.

31. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the release of children, mostly ex-combatants, by ex-Sierra Leone Army elements from the Occra Hills (48 children) and Kabala (329 children). UNAMSIL has played an important role in this process through negotiations for the release of the children and provision of logistical support and military escorts to ensure their safe transfer to interim care centres.

32. On 22 February 2000, Parliament approved the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has assisted in the drafting of that Act and is in the process of identifying areas of support and technical assistance to be extended in the preparatory process, including the launching of a national public information and awareness campaign. The draft statute for the national Human Rights Commission has been finalized and is expected to be submitted by UNAMSIL to the Government of Sierra Leone in March.

33. The UNAMSIL human rights section has considerably stepped up its training and institution-building activities in the past two months. Human rights training, including specialized gender and child rights training, was provided to national human rights monitors, police officers, and UNAMSIL military personnel. Plans are also under way to provide human rights training to ex-combatants, including former child combatants.

Child protection

34. A senior child protection adviser has recently been deployed with UNAMSIL to help ensure that the protection of children's rights is a priority concern throughout the peacekeeping process and the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. As a focal point for the protection of children's rights within the peace process, the adviser will liaise with all relevant agencies and entities and will work in tandem with the various components of UNAMSIL on pertinent matters such as the release of child abductees, the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, the provision of support for victims of sexual violence and mutilation, and the provision of child rights training to UNAMSIL staff and national entities and groups (police, non-governmental organizations, former combatants).

VI. HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS

35. With the deployment of UNAMSIL military units, humanitarian access is showing some signs of improvement. In addition, the demand made by RUF in Makeni early this year that all aid be channelled through its humanitarian wing, the Organization for the Survival of Mankind (OSM) has now been withdrawn. At the Government's invitation, the RUF Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs has been integrated into the National Commission for Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, while the United Nations has encouraged RUF to transform the Organization for the Survival of Mankind into an independent non-governmental organization.

36. As a result, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in mid-February conducted the first multisectoral humanitarian assessment of the north of the country since October 1999, when fighting between RUF and AFRC elements there forced aid workers to withdraw. As the harvest has just been completed, the widespread malnutrition that was prevalent six months ago has been temporarily alleviated. Planning is under way for targeted food assistance to internally displaced persons, hospital patients and schoolchildren, to be accompanied by distribution of seeds and tools and food-for-agriculture programmes for farming families. While large-scale food aid is not considered necessary at this stage, it is anticipated that further support to farming families will ultimately be required to prevent a recurrence of malnutrition. Urgent action is also needed to address the appalling condition of health, water, sanitation and school facilities in most of the assessed areas.

37. Meanwhile, the delays in the disarmament and continuing RUF resistance to the deployment of United Nations troops continue to slow humanitarian access to approximately 2.6 million war-affected Sierra Leoneans in the upper Northern and Eastern Provinces. Only limited humanitarian assistance has been possible in the critical locations of Kambia in the Northern Province and Kailahun and Kono in the Eastern Province.

38. Lack of access also continues to negatively affect the ability of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to monitor and assist refugees as well as to investigate reports of refugee returns in those areas. However, a small number of Sierra Leonean refugees from Liberia have reportedly returned to Pujehun. UNHCR projections indicate that as many as 108,000 refugees out of a total of 450,000 could return to Sierra Leone this year, if security conditions allow.

39. Conditions for the resettlement of war-affected populations are gradually improving in the Southern Province, as well as the Western Area and some parts of the lower Eastern Province, such as Kenema. As a result, the Government, with support from United Nations agencies, has begun planning for the resettlement of internally displaced persons to the areas under Government control, starting with 52,000 persons currently residing in nine camps in the Western Area. Those internally displaced persons who are able or willing to return will be provided with resettlement assistance packages, including food for work and training, as well as other related programmes.

40. Should humanitarian access increase dramatically, the United Nations agencies will require additional generous support from the international donor community. The 1999 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Sierra Leone which requested $25 million has so far been funded for only 42 per cent. The 2000 Appeal is seeking $70.9 million. Early in February 2000, representatives of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR travelled to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia to examine the relief situation in the subregion.

VII. STEPS AHEAD

41. One of the main priorities for the United Nations in Sierra Leone remains the speedy establishment of a credible peacekeeping presence throughout the country to create the necessary climate of confidence and security conditions for the implementation of various aspects of the peace process. UNAMSIL and the Secretariat are doing everything possible to accelerate the attainment of this objective and the Sierra Leonean parties, in particular RUF, must provide their full cooperation to UNAMSIL and unconditional access to all parts of the country. It should be borne in mind that the deployment of UNAMSIL is not a goal in itself, nor is it directed against or designed to favour one party. Through the security it provides, UNAMSIL is to create the conditions for all Sierra Leonean parties to disarm and bring national reconciliation and the peace process to a successful conclusion. The early establishment of the Mission's presence on the ground would also facilitate the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to all areas and would help to restore normalcy to life and economic activity.

42. At this juncture, it would be useful to outline other main steps ahead in the Sierra Leone peace process. This would help to set priorities and the responsibilities of all concerned and would also provide the international community with benchmarks by which to measure progress. The main steps ahead could be grouped under four headings: the early disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all ex-combatants; the extension of State authority, including law enforcement, throughout the country; national reconciliation and democratization; and the improvement of Sierra Leone's capacity to ensure its own security. Significant progress during the year 2000 towards these important objectives would be an essential condition for the organization and conduct of the credible parliamentary and presidential elections envisaged early in 2001 and would set the stage for the economic recovery of the country.

43. It is obvious that progress towards these objectives would require full and sustained commitment by the Government of Sierra Leone, RUFP and other Sierra Leonean parties, and on the part of the international community. It should be noted that serious doubts remain about the commitment of RUFP to the peace process; it should immediately take convincing measures to dispel these doubts. At the same time, my Special Representative will continue to make himself available to Mr. Sankoh and other Sierra Leonean leaders for consultations and, when possible, address any justifiable concerns or doubts they may have in a transparent and constructive dialogue.

44. The parties to the Lomé Agreement and their international partners must make full use of and strengthen the mechanisms envisaged in that agreement to promote the implementation of all its aspects, such as the Joint Implementation Committee, the Joint Monitoring Committee and the local ceasefire monitoring committees.

Early disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all ex-combatants

45. According to the Lomé Agreement, the encampment, disarmament and demobilization process should have commenced in parallel with the deployment of the neutral peacekeeping force envisaged in the Agreement. The current slow pace of this process can be linked in part to the obstruction being placed in the way of the deployment of UNAMSIL, which in turn has affected the assurance of the security necessary to install the required camp infrastructure and facilities. Provided, therefore, that UNAMSIL can be deployed throughout the country and provide security for ex-combatants of all factions in an equal and impartial manner, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process should be accelerated through a flexible and result-oriented approach. Existing gaps and difficulties, such as living conditions in the camps, payment of allowances and the issuance of identity cards, should be addressed as a matter of urgency. If possible, it would also be important to avoid the serious difficulties in the management and logistic support of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration camps that could occur during Sierra Leone's rainy season, which starts in June. In general, there is a clear need for all stakeholders to agree on a realistic target date for the completion of the disarmament and demobilization of all ex-combatants and to step up efforts aimed at increasing awareness among them about the modalities of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. In this regard, RUF should provide, as a matter of urgency, full and complete information on the number of combatants under its command and ensure that they comply with that programme.

46. At the same time, it is crucial that the Government of Sierra Leone, through the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and its national and international partners, also step up its efforts to implement all aspects of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. While some progress has been made in the planning for the reintegration of ex-combatants, much remains to be done to ensure that relevant projects are developed and implemented quickly to meet the needs of demobilized ex-combatants, returning refugees, internally displaced persons, and war-affected communities in all provinces of Sierra Leone. This should be closely coordinated with all humanitarian and development organizations, including the United Nations agencies involved. It is hoped that the Government will take full advantage of its leadership role to move the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme forward.

47. The success of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is also closely linked to the restructuring of the armed forces (see paras. 54 and 55 below), which should absorb a substantial number of former combatants from all groups. This restructuring exercise should be implemented in a consistent and transparent manner so as to further encourage disarmament and demobilization without raising unrealistic expectations on the part of ex-combatants. It is also important that the restructuring be carried out in

full accordance with the relevant provisions of the Lomé Agreement, which specify that those interested in joining the new army should disarm first, and meet established and objective criteria, and that the composition of the new army should reflect the geopolitical structure of Sierra Leone.

Extension of State authority

48. The extension of State authority throughout the country is a crucial short-term and long-term objective. In the short term, the successful implementation of internationally funded projects to reintegrate ex-combatants, deliver humanitarian assistance and rehabilitate war-affected communities requires the presence of governmental partners at the provincial, district and community levels. Such a presence is also an indispensable requirement for the organization and conduct of elections by Sierra Leone early next year. In the longer term, the Government, with the support of the international community, would be able to ensure the country's post-war rehabilitation, reconstruction and development only if it had at its disposal a credible infrastructure at the national and local levels. A key objective in this regard is the creation of viable mechanisms which would allow the Government and the people of Sierra Leone to reap the benefits of the exploitation of the country's strategic resources.

49. At present, the main obstacle to the extension of State authority to the provinces is the continuing refusal by RUF of access to areas in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, including areas of major economic activity. Immediate steps should be taken by RUF to cease interference with the circulation of goods and persons, which is impeded by roadblocks and clearance demands and by local authorities which operate outside the Government. UNAMSIL stands ready to assist in dismantling such parallel structures and creating a secure environment for the free flow of civilian and commercial traffic. At the same time, it should be underlined that UNAMSIL has neither the mandate nor the intention to stop or interfere with any economic activity. The exploitation of natural resources falls entirely within the responsibility of the Government and its relevant organs, in particular the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development under the chairmanship of Mr. Sankoh. It is essential that the Commission becomes fully operational as soon as possible and that the Government and the international community provide this important body with all necessary assistance. Such assistance would however be contingent on the elaboration by the Commission of a viable programme of work. In addition to support for the Government's efforts to manage and regulate the exploitation of its strategic resources, the international community may also wish to consider measures to help curb the sale of illegally mined diamonds from Sierra Leone.

50. At present, it is urgent that a draft plan for the re-establishment of State administration in the Makeni/Magburaka area be prepared with a time frame for the deployment of civil authorities, including police officers. This planning should be closely coordinated with UNAMSIL with regard to security arrangements, as well as with humanitarian and development activity, in order to draw on all available resources. It is expected that UNAMSIL political and civil affairs, as well as human rights, officers will be deployed at Magburaka at the end of March to facilitate the resumption of Government activities.

Plans to extend State administration to other locations should also be accelerated.

National reconciliation and democratization

51. For peace in Sierra Leone to take root, it would be important that the parties to the Lomé Agreement and other political currents in Sierra Leone initiate in the near future a process of national healing and work together to foster respect for the rule of law, democratic principles and human rights. It is important that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Human Rights Commission, both envisaged in the Lomé Agreement, soon be established and start their work with the full cooperation of all Sierra Leonean parties.

52. It is equally important that all political parties, including RUFP, be able to participate fully in the political life of the country. The transformation of RUF from a rebel movement into a political party which would be fully incorporated into the political mainstream of the country deserves necessary support, and I call all concerned in Sierra Leone and on the international community to consider providing such assistance. The international community's support would depend on clear indications from RUFP, in particular through the disarmament of its fighters, that it is fully committed to the democratic process.

53. As Sierra Leone approaches the 2001 elections, all major political parties in the country should be able to participate in the electoral campaign. In particular, there should be equal access by all of them to the media. In due course, I intend to submit for the consideration of the Security Council a plan of action in support of the elections.

Rebuilding Sierra Leone's security forces

54. As was indicated in my last report, the assistance of the international community to Sierra Leone cannot be open-ended and the Government should do its utmost to ensure that it can maintain a stable democracy and guarantee the security of its territory and institutions. The early establishment of a professional national army would also allow UNAMSIL to gradually reduce its presence in the country. The preparation of a military reintegration plan by the Ministry of Defence constitutes an important benchmark in this process. The draft plan foresees the establishment of the armed forces with a strength of about 8,500 personnel, all of whom have to meet the established screening criteria and undergo standardized training. The screening is scheduled for April/May; concerted efforts should therefore be made to accelerate the transfer of ex-combatants from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration camps to a special facility in the area of Mile 91. Obviously, the Government will need substantial international assistance to organize and train the new armed forces, which would be able to perform their constitutional role as envisaged in the Lomé Agreement. I wish to express my appreciation for the leading role the United Kingdom has assumed in this regard. It is hoped that, in due course, the new Sierra Leonean armed forces will be able to complement and, where appropriate, replace UNAMSIL in maintaining security throughout the country, in particular when the delicate period of elections begins next year.

55. The rehabilitation of the Sierra Leone police force plays a crucial role in all efforts to strengthen the national security system and restore the rule of law. Some progress has been made in this regard, but much remains to be done to meet basic needs for restoring police authority and to address special areas of concern. In view of the high incidence of drug trafficking and addiction, which has been a disturbing aspect of the armed conflict in Sierra Leone, measures also need to be taken to address this issue in its security and social aspects.

56. To achieve the objectives set out above, it will be necessary to set up a countrywide public information campaign, which would also help to promote understanding about the role and mandate of the United Nations and other international organizations. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the organization and conduct of the elections would particularly benefit from such a campaign. The Department of Public Information will conduct an assessment of public information needs for the expansion of the capacity of UNAMSIL in this vital area.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS

57. It is clear that much remains to be done to further the peace process in Sierra Leone and that significant material and financial resources will be required to achieve the objectives described above. In this regard, I very much welcome the organization of a donor conference in London on 27 March 2000 and I trust that all major stakeholders will actively participate in it. I also appeal to the donor community to make generous contributions to the World Bank Multi-donor Trust Fund to cover the present shortfall of approximately $20 million in the funding of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. While the Multi-donor Trust Fund provides an important funding mechanism for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, I believe it would be useful if financial support for various other aspects of the peace process, including small-scale quick-impact projects, civil affairs, the rehabilitation of the civilian police, support for political parties (including the transformation of RUFP into a political party) and other democratization efforts could also be provided through United Nations mechanisms. It would be my intention to revise accordingly the terms of reference of the United Nations Sierra Leone Trust Fund, which was originally set up to support ECOMOG and other peacekeeping-related efforts.

58. However, resources alone are not sufficient. The Government, RUFP and other groups, and all Sierra Leonean leaders bear a personal responsibility for moving the peace process forward and I call on them to intensify their efforts. I am convinced that tangible commitment by the Sierra Leonean parties will be used as a yardstick by donors in deciding whether or not to make funds available to the country.

59. Despite the precarious security situation in Sierra Leone, modest progress has undeniably been made in the country towards the implementation of the governance provisions of the Lomé Agreement, especially with regard to the functioning of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace and the Constitutional Review Committee.

60. At the same time, I continue to be very concerned about the often negative and confusing approach taken by Mr. Sankoh to key elements of the peace process and the role entrusted to the United Nations. Hostile public remarks by the RUFP leader about UNAMSIL and its mandate have led to increasing tension between RUF fighters and UNAMSIL troops on the ground. This dangerous trend is detrimental to the peace process and should be stopped. Quite understandably, the present situation gives rise to serious doubts about the commitment of Mr. Sankoh and RUF to the faithful implementation of the Peace Agreement. Accordingly, I call upon him to dispel these doubts in a tangible and unequivocal manner.

61. Equally important, the continuing ceasefire violations perpetrated against civilians and peacekeepers cannot be tolerated by the international community. Furthermore, the persistent obstruction of UNAMSIL patrols and deployments is unacceptable and must cease immediately. Nothing short of the full cooperation of all the parties concerned, particularly RUFP, is required. A major test of the intentions of RUF towards the peace process is the speedy return of all the weapons and equipment seized from Guinean and Kenyan troops and allowing UNAMSIL free movement throughout the country.

62. UNAMSIL has made impressive progress, in the face of considerable difficulties, in deploying to many locations in Sierra Leone, including areas where previously no ECOMOG peacekeepers had been deployed. I hope that the continuing expansion of UNAMSIL will help to instil confidence and accelerate the process of disarmament, the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and a return to normal life for all of the people in Sierra Leone. In this regard, there should be no doubt about the resolve and determination of the international community to help Sierra Leone, as reflected in Security Council resolutions, or about the mandate, strength and rules of engagement of UNAMSIL. It bears repeating that this peacekeeping operation has been established in response to the request of the signatories of the Lomé Agreement, including Mr. Sankoh, for a neutral peacekeeping force.

63. I am gratified by the commitment shown by the ECOWAS Chairman, President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali, in supporting the peace process in Sierra Leone. His visit to Freetown, the convening of the second meeting of the Joint Implementation Committee soon after his taking over of the chairmanship of ECOWAS, and the organization of a special meeting at Bamako on 1 and 2 March have provided an important impetus to peace consolidation efforts. The efforts of other leaders of the region also are crucial to keeping the peace process firmly on track and I hope that they will continue to extend their welcome cooperation in this regard.

64. In the "steps ahead" section above, I indicated the important challenges that lie ahead in the Sierra Leone peace process. For this process to succeed, it is imperative that the leaders of the Government of Sierra Leone and the leaders of RUF and other groups show tangible commitment to the implementation of the Lomé Agreement. In particular, Mr. Sankoh and other rebel leaders are expected to fully assume their responsibilities before the people of Sierra Leone. Of course, differences of opinion concerning some elements of the Lomé Agreement may occur in time, but these should be addressed in an open, constructive and democratic manner.

65. The international community is grateful to the Governments of Ghana, Guinea, India, Kenya and Nigeria for their valuable contributions to the UNAMSIL force. The Government of Nigeria, in particular, has made an important contribution, showing the necessary flexibility, by keeping essential troops and equipment in Sierra Leone to avoid a security vacuum while UNAMSIL is gradually building up its strength. Gratitude is equally due to all the other Governments that have contributed to this important peacekeeping endeavour by providing military observers or civilian police or in other ways.

66. The humanitarian needs of all Sierra Leoneans still cannot be met in all parts of the country, which is a source of major concern. It is recalled that the Lomé Peace Agreement clearly commits all parties to providing safe and unhindered access to all areas in the country. The rapid implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme could significantly facilitate the work of the humanitarian community in delivering much-needed assistance to all groups in need.

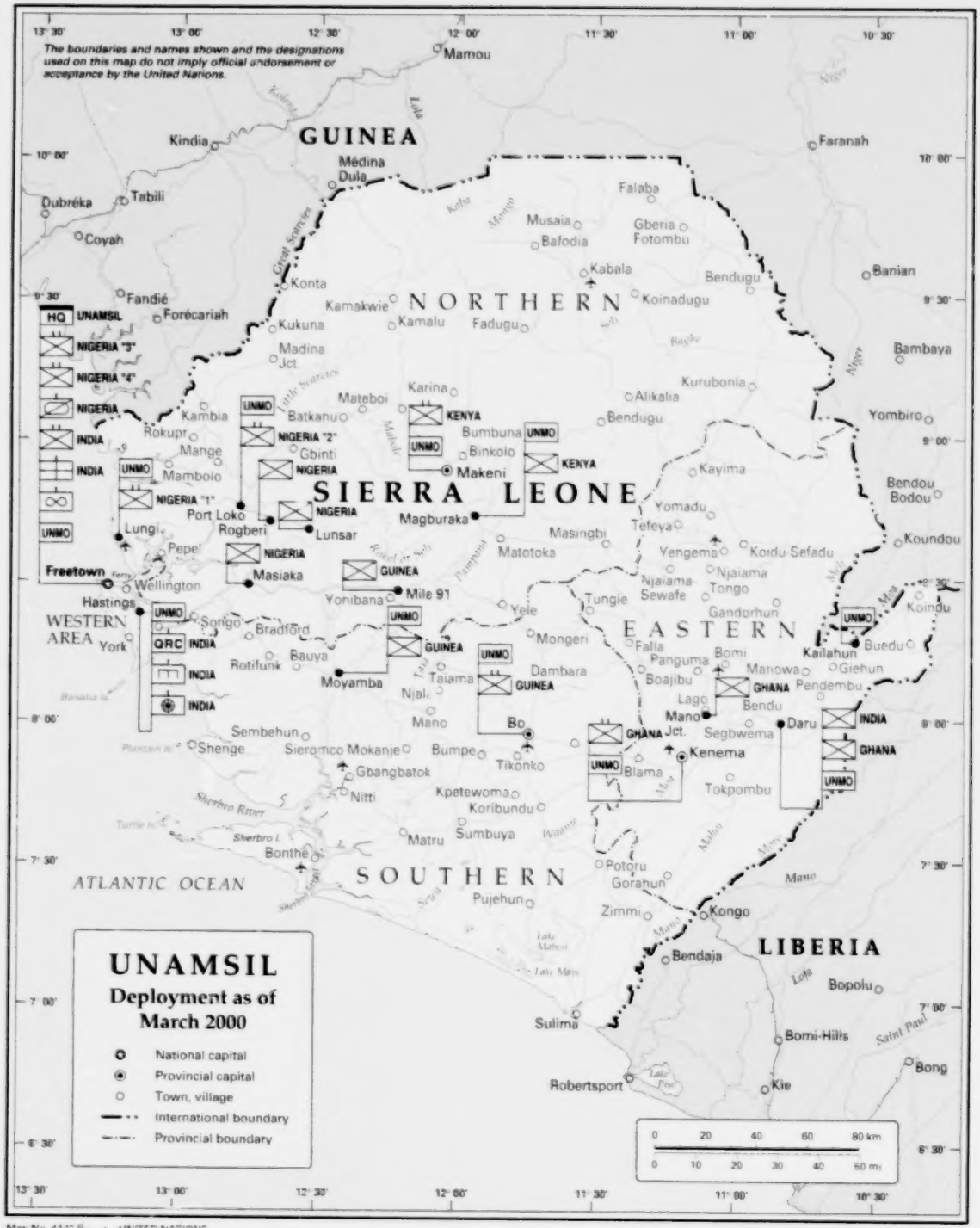
67. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, the UNAMSIL Force Commander, Major General Vijay Kumar Jetley, and the military and civilian personnel of UNAMSIL, as well as United Nations programmes and agencies and other institutions working in the country, for their dedication and tireless efforts to advance the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone: contributions as at 1 March 2000

	Military observers	Staff Officers	Troops	Total
Bangladesh	12			12
Bolivia	4			4
Canada	5			5
China	6			6
Croatia	10			10
Czech Republic	5			5
Denmark	2			2
Egypt	10			10
France	3			3
Gambia	26			26
Ghana	4	3	774	781
Guinea	12	3	776	791
India	14	18	1 473	1 505
Indonesia	10			10
Jordan	5			5
Kenya	11	10	816	837
Kyrgyzstan	2			2
Malaysia	10			10
Mali	8			8
Nepal	6			6
New Zealand	2			2
Nigeria	4	9	3 241	3 254
Norway	5			5
Pakistan	10			10
Russian Federation	15			15
Slovakia	2			2
Sweden	3			3
Thailand	5			5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	15		8	23
United Republic of Tanzania	12			12
Uruguay	11			11
Zambia	11			11
Total	260	43	7 088	7 391

Civilian police deployed (6): Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Namibia and Norway.



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